

UNCLAS LILONGWE 000734

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP (YOUSEY) AND AF/RSA (ZUEHLKE)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: TIP OPEN FOR DISCUSSION IN MALAWI

REF: A. LILONGWE 723

[1B.](#) LILONGWE 710

[11.](#) SUMMARY. On July 29, post hosted a Human Rights Symposium focused on trafficking in persons (TIP). In attendance were numerous GOM officials, including Minister of Gender, Child Welfare, and Community Services Joyce Banda. The keynote address was presented by Supreme Court Justice Anastazia Msosa, and focused on what actions the GOM and civil society organizations might take to address the issue in Malawi. Also in attendance were media representatives, NGO leaders, and diplomats, all of whom contributed to a thoughtful, intelligent discussion of how the problem of human trafficking can best be addressed in Malawi. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) In her keynote address Supreme Court Justice Anastazia Msosa pointed out that widespread poverty and rampant HIV/AIDS infection are likely behind Malawi's nascent TIP problem. Regardless of these reasons, she said, human trafficking cannot be tolerated and must be addressed. She called for tougher laws which would "close the gaps" in the existing penal code and a careful study of the exact nature of the problem in Malawi, both of which would permit the GOM to "lead the fight" against TIP. Msosa, a well-respected, vocal human rights advocate, spoke openly about the need to develop and implement a national, regional, and global network to "speak with one voice" against human trafficking.

[13.](#) Minister Banda opted not to make a formal presentation (NOTE: Likely because of the GOM's refutation of the TIP report, reftel A.) Banda did, however, add pertinent comments to the general discussion and was eager to hear from human rights NGOs and USG officials. "You have an ally in me," she said when asked for a reaction to the discussion.

[14.](#) None of the GOM or NGO representatives present expressed surprise that TIP occurred in Malawi, and most seemed more interested in the way forward than in the mechanics of the report or of U.S. policy. One senior GOM official who works in a ministry which has been particularly vocal in rejecting the TIP report's findings admitted that as traffickers become more "sophisticated," Malawi's laws need to keep pace and become equally sophisticated.

[15.](#) On August 2, an article in a nationwide daily newspaper correctly quoted the TIP report and referenced Msosa's July 29 remarks. The leader of a well-known NGO umbrella organization is quoted as saying that while the GOM lacks the capacity to investigate TIP, it can do more to address the problem.

[16.](#) COMMENT. The issue of TIP is officially open for discussion in Malawi, a good start in raising awareness and encouraging action. The attendance of several key GOM officials at the symposium and the GOM's scathing, but inconsistent, rebuttal to the TIP report both indicate that the issue has caught the GOM's attention. As in our initial meeting regarding TIP (reftel B), the Minister was not interested in debating the USG's report, but rather gave us assurances of her interest in preventing TIP from increasing in Malawi. The GOM's capacity and resources to investigate and prevent TIP are extremely limited; partnerships with NGOs and churches are likely to yield the best results in the fight against TIP. The recent publicity and, in the case of the GOM, unease regarding TIP may well serve as a catalyst for action.

RASPOLIC